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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SERBIA WEEKLY UPDATE (4/9 - 4/13)

REF: BELGRADE 483

CLASSIFIED BY POLOFF IAN CAMPBELL, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) This cable summarizes notable events relating to Serbia and Kosovo.

12. (SBU) Summary: For the week of April 9, Serbia's self-titled "diplomatic offensive" to block passage of a UNSC resolution on Kosovo was the dominant event related to Kosovo and Serbia. The Ambassador and his French counterpart hosted a lunch for journalists to directly address USG support for supervised independence for Kosovo (reftel). German Ambassador Zobel caused a mini-tempest when he was attributed as saying instability in Kosovo could lead to irredentism in Vojvodina and the Sandzak. CODEL Rohrabacher visited Belgrade on April 13 and met with President Tadic. End Summary.

UNSC: THE VIEW FROM BELGRADE

13. (U) PM Kostunica continued his sanguine assessment that no UNSC resolution will emerge based on the Ahtisaari plan, citing on 4/9 "Serbia's irrefutable arguments." In an interview to Blic, Serbia's PermRep to the UN Pavle Jeremic warned against "moves to score winning points in the local political scene" with regards to Kosovo. Jeremic cautioned that Serbia should remain realistic despite having "won the first round in the UNSC."

14. (U) Outgoing FM Draskovic told Vecernje Novosti on 4/9 that a new negotiating process on the future Kosovo status "has already started" through Serbia's consultations with UNSC member states, adding that the result can only be a compromise. Draskovic left for Pretoria this week to meet with his counterpart to explain Serbia's stand on Kosovo and ask that South Africa not lend support to Ahtisaari's plan. The next countries to be visited will be Congo and Ghana.

15. (U) On April 10, Tadic said he ruled out the possibility of "bartering" the province's independence for Serbia's integration with the EU, calling it an "indecent proposal." Tadic also stressed that EU membership is Serbia's most important strategic goal. He added that Serbia's efforts to block the final adoption of Ahtisaari's plan by the UNSC will not destroy Serbia's relations with the U.S. and the West. Tadic advisor Vuk Jeremic said that Serbia's diplomatic outreach on Kosovo has been both bilateral and multilateral.

16. (U) On security, Tadic assured that Serbia is prepared to help "in any way in establishing security in Kosovo." Tadic said there is a professional level of cooperation between KFOR and Serbian Armed Forces.

17. (U) Belgrade media reported the Ambassador's comments on 4/11 that he expects a UNSC Resolution on Kosovo to be adopted "in late spring or early summer," and to "open the door for supervised independence for Kosovo." He also said that the UNSC has started work on "drafting an adequate resolution" and said Ahtisaari's "fair and

reasonable" plan presents a solution, something that no one has been able to do previously.

¶8. (U) Belgrade media also widely covered UNSYG Ban Ki Moon comments to French and Slovenian press that he backs Ahtisaari's plan and describes it as a solid foundation for the future Kosovo status and contains everything needed for a workable and long-term solution. He also stated that Kosovo can no longer be a part of Serbia because the 90% Albanian population in it simply no longer want to live in Serbia. Ahtisaari's comments that Serbia has to accept Kosovo's independence if it wishes to join the EU received attention in Serbia.

GERMAN AMBASSADOR CAUSES FIRESTORM

¶9. (U) German Ambassador to Serbia Andreas Zobel created a firestorm on 4/11 with comments that "problems in Vojvodina and Sandzak might flare up" if Kosovo does not become independent. B92 reported that Zobel said it was not true "that Kosovo had always belonged to Serbia, since it officially became Serbia's in 1912, along with Vojvodina, which joined in 1918." Zobel added that PM Kostunica, President Tadic and their "wise advisors" could not explain to him the precise meaning of the formula "more than autonomy and less than independence." As to the Ahtisaari plan, Zobel said it was "not good, but better than all other possible solutions." The possible UNSC visit to the region, he said, "could only come to one conclusion - Serbs and Albanians cannot live together."

¶10. (U) A statement from the German Embassy the following morning said Zobel's statements were "taken out of context" and that the Ambassador was only making a point that "EU integration was the best guarantee for Serbia's stability." Later in the day, Zobel held a

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press conference, apologized, and stressed that his statements should only be assigned to him personally, and not to Germany or the EU.

¶11. (U) The GOS announced it would issue "a most severe protest to the German government regarding Ambassador Zobel's statements." A GOS statement described Zobel's remarks as "impertinent meddling into Serbia's affairs." The statement continued, "despite the hospitality he was shown in Serbia, Ambassador Zobel has demonstrated disrespect for the dignity of state institutions in this country." Reactions on 4/13 followed this line as well, with Radical party hardliners calling for Zobel to be declared persona non grata.

CONGRESSMAN ROHRBACHER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TADIC

¶12. (c) Tadic used a 4/13 meeting with Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) to urge the Congress not to move forward with a resolution supporting the Ahtisaari plan and supervised independence for Kosovo.

Tadic said that in order for him to be able to pursue his vision of maintaining a strategic partnership with the U.S. in the aftermath of a Kosovo status decision, he would need to have a reservoir of policymakers in the US who he could portray to the Serbian people as sensitive to Serbia and its interests, and that a resolution now would tie the Congress to the administration policy and not allow for him to create room to work with US policymakers after Kosovo. The Congressman reiterated that there is absolute unity between the legislative and executive branches on Kosovo, and said he would make every effort to ensure that the resolution included language that highlighted the importance of continued positive U.S.-Serbian relations.

REFUGEE/IDP ISSUES

¶13. (SBU) Cross-Boundary Legal Assistance Project Recovered one Apartment, Many Documents for IDPs: Six months through the project year, direct service providers engaged in the PRM-funded legal assistance project, through a grant to CRS, are exceeding all expectations. In a meeting with RefAssistant, the local NGOs provided the following YTD statistics: The Balkan Center for

Migrations and Humanitarian Activities (BCM) in Belgrade served 742 clients mostly on property-related issues and to obtain personal documents; The War Affected Persons' Relief and Protection Committee assisted 1,551 clients, helping to secure documents and providing other legal services; Norma, a Kosovo-based organization, collaborated with BCM to assist 34 clients with documents and property claims. They received one referral from the Kosovo Legal Aid Kosovo, a nascent, government-funded program, not yet fully operational. Norma's greatest success to date led to the repossession of an apartment in Urosevac/Ferizaj, on behalf of an IDP. Norma challenged a falsified contract of sale, and won the case both in the municipal court in Urosevac, and before the district court in Pristina, on appeal.

¶14. (SBU) UNHCR and local NGO Praxis presented, at the April IDP working group conference, an "Analysis of the Situation of Internally Displaced Persons from Kosovo in Serbia: Law and Practice." The gap analysis laid out for the Government of Serbia 19 recommendations to improve for improving the lives of IDPs. Several recommendations targeted stepping up government efforts to ensure the rights of Roma IDPs, their access to social benefits, and ability to secure housing and basic protections; Many others focused on facilitating the process by which IDPs obtain personal and property records, citing specifically the need to automate the archives from Kosovo (the so-called dislocated registry office books). Praxis also presented a glossy, reader-friendly study "access to Documentation for IDPs in Serbia" which they prepared in the course of executing a PRM-supported project under the direction of UNHCR. UNHCR highlighted PRM support legal assistance project, well designed to fill the gaps.

¶15. (SBU) UNHCR Fine-tunes Legal Assistance Project: UNHCR has submitted documentation of revisions to the regional legal assistance proposal. UNHCR proposed augmenting the ongoing, successful Roma civil registration program in Kosovo and, because of insurmountable impediments to concluding a cooperation agreement with the Mitrovica University Law School, providing the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kosovo) training and capacity building related to asylum and migration, registration, and prevention of statelessness.

¶16. (SBU) Serbian Commissioner for Refugees Dabetic told RefCoord and RefAssist that he was uninterested in conducting a new registration of IDPs in Serbia independent of a Kosovo general census. (Note: Kosovo last conducted a census in the early 1990s. End note.) UNHCR figures set the number of IDPs registered in Serbia at about 206,000. Many agree on the need to resurvey the population to determine how many of this number have either successfully integrated, returned to Kosovo, left the region, or returned to Serbia, having failed to obtain asylum (or work) elsewhere. Dabetic argues that a survey in

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Serbia without a parallel census in Kosovo would result in significant double counting of individuals in the process of migrating across the boundary and those who maintain residences in both areas.

OTHER DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

¶17. (U) China & Russia: On 4/11, a GOS spokesman announced that officials from China and Russia will visit Belgrade on April 17 (Chinese Deputy PM Hui Liyangyu), and April 18-19 (Russian FM Lavrov).

¶18. (U) UK: British Ambassador to Serbia Wordsworth said earlier this week that he hoped the Kosovo issue would be resolved with the adoption of a UNSC resolution before the June G8 summit.

¶19. (U) EU: Belgrade media reported EU Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana's statements that the 27 EU member states "fully support" the EU's preparation for the ICO, which will be based on a new UNSC resolution.

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